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ON PAGE F-15

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Agent of Soviets Tried to Thwart Olympic Boycott

The Kremlin's attempt to infiltrate the grass-roots nuclear-freeze movement in this country and exploit it for Soviet propaganda purposes isn't the first time the KGB has tried such tactics in recent years.

Documents locked in the files of the FBI and State Department reveal a fascinating attempt by the Soviets to sabotage the Carter administration's decision to boycott the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games.

Obviously upset by the boycott announcement, the Soviets assigned their third secretary in the Washington embassy to take steps that would counteract the decision. The embassy third secretary, Viktor Petrovich Tyutin, like most Soviet diplomatic personnel, was a KGB agent.

Acting for the KGB, Tyutin contacted a politically well-connected American in January, 1980, with a scheme to undercut President Carter's boycott. The American reported the plan to the FBI.

Tyutin's game plan: he suggested to his American contact that a committee of athletes and prominent political figures be formed to protest the Olympics boycott. The idea was

to have 60,000 letters sent out, asking recipients to write the White House and members of Congress denouncing the boycott.

Tyutin offered the American an unspecified amount for his services and for the printing and mailing of the letters. He insisted that his name—and any connection with the Soviet Embassy—be kept secret. Tyutin also suggested that a group of Americans be formed to go to Moscow, attend the Summer Olympics and issue a news release criticizing the boycott.

The FBI called Tyutin's scheme a "classic covert active-measures operation." It failed because the American contact reported it to the FBI, which then informed the State Department. Tyutin left Washington for home in May, 1980.

Another, more recent example of the KGB's "active measures" occurred last June. It involved a legitimate New Orleans consulting firm, Aviation Personnel International, which numbers among its clients such blue-chip corporations as RCA and General Mills.

According to a letter on API stationery, dated April 26, 1982, the company had a secret agreement to provide mercenary helicopter pilots for the South African air force. The letter also alluded to a secret deal among the United States, South Africa and API to take part in the abortive coup attempt in the Seychelles in November, 1981.

The letter was signed by API's assistant registrar, "Michelle Lang." It was used as the basis for articles in several African newspapers, including The Harare Herald in Salisbury, Rhodesia, as evidence of an apparent plot by the United States and South Africa to overthrow the leftist government in the Seychelles.

But the letter was a fake. "Michelle Lang" is a code name used by API on some form letters. "Her" signature is a composite of those of two employees. "It was a good attempt to sign 'Michelle,'" an API spokesman told my associate Tony Capaccio. "We were surprised."

A CIA analysis found: "The API letter is a total fabrication and its contents have no basis in fact whatsoever. The apparent political motivation behind the forgery—and Soviet forgery practice—all suggest Soviet involvement."

Culture Vultures: Federal funds for the study of Soviet and Chinese language and culture are easily cut, but at the cost of potentially valuable opportunities. For example, a U.S. expert, invited to visit Afghanistan two weeks before the Soviet invasion, had to decline for lack of money. More recently, a Soviet expert on Uzbekistan in Soviet Central Asia expressed interest in visiting America. He was an adviser to the Soviet puppet regime in Afghanistan at the time, and might have provided valuable insights. Again, there was no money to bring him.